



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Presentation of the Co-Chairs of the Alliance of Civilizations

As delivered by Chargé d'Affaires Kyle Scott
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
May 4, 2006

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

The United States would also like to warmly welcome the Co-Chairs of the Alliance of Civilizations and to thank them very much for their thought-provoking interventions. It has been very useful to hear about the Alliance directly from you, so that we, the OSCE participating States, can make informed decisions about our own priorities for cooperation with the Alliance, both bilaterally and through this organization.

My country believes that the Alliance of Civilizations initiative can lead to important results, especially if its activities focus on building up civil society's capacity to reject extremist forces, and to encourage moderate voices to speak out. How can we do this? Well, several ideas have already been suggested:

- through educational programs;
- through developing links among schools, media and civil society;
- reaching out to youth and marginalized groups, including through the Internet;
- and holding regional conferences and workshops to promote interaction between experts from diverse backgrounds and cultures.

We also strongly believe the Alliance should highlight the important roles of human rights and democracy, which are the real antidotes to extremism. These are both areas in which the OSCE is especially active, and they are therefore logical areas for cooperation between our organization and the Alliance.

The OSCE is the only international organization with consensus commitments based on a comprehensive approach to security, which includes also attention to human rights and fundamental freedoms, the rule of law, and tolerance and non-discrimination.

Implementation of these human dimension commitments, in turn, is one of the easiest and most effective ways that participating States can contribute to dialogue, understanding, and cooperation among cultures.

Dialogue about culture and faith is important in finding common ground against a backdrop of diversity. But dialogue is only possible in a context of freedom to practice your religion or belief or not to practice any religion at all; only possible in a context where legal migrant communities have opportunities for integration into a society that respects diversity; it's only possible in a context where equal access for all citizens to the institutions of democracy – such as voting, free media, and fair trials - is ensured.

Inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-faith dialogue can be especially effective at promoting alliances among diverse groups on areas of common concern that are unrelated to culture and faith. In our view, when people work together, they come to understand and respect each other as human beings, and highlight commonalities that help to ease tensions.

Inter-cultural partnerships to protect the environment, inter-faith movements to combat trafficking in persons, or inter-ethnic projects for sustainable rural development are all good examples of concrete activities the Alliance of Civilizations could pursue. And I think that follows along the ideas Professor Mayor put forward about concrete action. They are also, in our view, projects that this organization could cooperate on and work together with the Alliance in implementing.

The United States looks forward to exploring more ideas like these with governmental and non-governmental experts from the 55 participating States, as well as from our OSCE institutions and field presences, at the tolerance implementation meeting this June in Almaty. The Almaty meeting will also be another good opportunity to consider additional cooperation between the OSCE, participating States, and the Alliance of Civilizations. I hope that you, the Co-Chairs, or other members of the High-Level Group, will be able to also participate in that conference.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.